

- Offspring of pregnant brides generally did not suffer significantly higher fetal mortality than the postmarital group.
- The illegitimate group had by far the greatest risk of fetal death of the three legitimacy groups. The illegitimate fetal death rate at 23.0 was almost twice the combined legitimate rate of 12.5.

### Live Births and Infant Deaths

According to final statistics from the National Center for Health Statistics, only five states had higher infant mortality than North Carolina in 1974. Our rate of 19.4 infant deaths per 1,000 live births was lower than it has been, but it has not decreased more rapidly than in other states with like rates. There is a significant difference between the white infant death rate of 16.4 and the nonwhite rate of 26.0. There were a total of 1,618 infant deaths matched to 1974 North Carolina resident births. By legitimacy group, the numbers and rates were:

<u>Legitimacy Group</u>	<u>Infant Deaths</u>	<u>Rate per 1,000 Live Births</u>
Postmarital	1,123	17.1
Premarital	126	21.9
Illegitimate	369	29.2

Chi-square tests showed mortality differences among the three legitimacy groups to be statistically significant at the  $p < .01$  level.

Data from the table of this report are highlighted below:

- Surprising though it may seem, illegitimate white children were at less risk of infant death than their legitimate counterparts in the premarital group. The rates for whites by legitimacy groups were: postmarital 14.5, premarital 23.7, and illegitimate 22.4.
- Contrary to the finding for whites that the premarital group had the highest infant mortality was the finding that premarital nonwhites had the lowest infant mortality of the three legitimacy groups. The group rates for nonwhites were: postmarital 26.3, premarital 18.0, and illegitimate 30.7.
- While nonwhites in the premarital group had lower infant mortality than the postmarital and illegitimate nonwhite groups for many of the maternal characteristics in the table, one major exception was mothers of the first birth order. Looking at the row for parity one nonwhite mothers in the table reveals the following rates: postmarital 15.4, premarital 17.0, and illegitimate 25.3. Thus, when nonwhite infants are firstborn, the ones at the least risk of infant death are those conceived after marriage.
- Of the three age groups examined, mothers under 18 were associated with the highest level of infant mortality. Notice that for each legitimacy group, the rates for whites remained at something over 22 infant deaths per 1,000 live births to mothers under 18. Nonwhite infants of mothers less than 18 suffered even higher infant mortality, over 33 deaths per 1,000 live births in each legitimacy group.